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MAURICE HEWLETT

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PAN AND THE YOUNG SHEPHERD

The MMCo.

PAN *and the* YOUNG SHEPHERD

By

MAURICE HEWLETT

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PAN AND THE YOUNG SHEPHERD

A PASTORAL IN TWO ACTS

104311

THIS BOOK

IN ALL LOVE AND HONOUR

TO

H. B. H.

What I have is yours;
What I do is through you.
Take you the best of me
To hearten the rest of me.

PERSONS

GERON, an old Shepherd, Grandfather of Neanias.
NEANIAS, a young Shepherd.
BALKIS, his Mother.
TEUCER, MOPSUS, SPHORX, } Rustics.
MERLA, a Country Girl.
AGLAË, EROTION, SITYS, GEËRNA, PHŒNO, DRYAS, ADORA, } Daughters of the Earth.
PAN

SCENE

Pastoral Country: Champney Valtort in Pascency, and the Hills about it.

TIME

What you will. First Act August, Second Act November. The last scene Epiphany Eve.

And universal Pan, 'tis said, was there,
And though none saw him — through the adamant
Of the deep mountains, through the trackless air,
And through those living spirits, like a want
He pass'd out of his everlasting lair,
Where the quick heart of the great world doth pant.

THE WITCH OF ATLAS.

Fortunatus et ille deos qui novit agrestes,
Panaque, Silvanumque senem, Nymphasque sorores.

ECL. 8.

ACT THE FIRST

ACT THE FIRST

Neanias wanders in a wild,
Earth's daughters bid him stay;
Aglaë calleth without voice,
He kisseth cold away.

SCENE FIRST

A sheepfold in a valley. August night.
GERON *and* NEANIAS *by a wood fire.*

GERON

BOY, boy, wilt thou be a boy for ever?

NEANIAS

Like enough, grandfather, if I never see the world.

GERON

Thou talkest as if the world were full of teething-powder. It hath none so simple as thou canst win for thyself. Thou sittest with thy chin to thy naked knees reading runes in the embers, and thinkest the world flows wi'

meat and drink. It hath as much as this valley, and no more; for the fullest bowl on earth can but fill its master's belly. I have lived 'twixt ridge and fell my eighty years. Year by year I have seen hoggets grow theaves, and theaves ewes, and ewes drop their lambs and die culls; I have fed and drunk of them, too wise that they or the world should feed and drink o' me. For the way of the world — see now, I will teach thee wisdom — the way of the world is clutch lest thou be clutchet; and the wise man huggeth his treasure in a small still, lest, enlarging somewhat, he do but swell another man's hoard. The valley here is the world in small. I am the lord of this world, and the sheep are my hinds, by whose sweat I do live.

NEANIAS

Must I go round like a rat in a cage?

GERON

You may change cages; you will still go round. See here: I've made my own beer since I could drink it; paid the size; size o' bread and ale; multure o' mill; hearthstead on the Stinted Ground — that's solid, boy! That's the Free Commoner of Champney

Valtort; that's the respected man. Eight times Reeve; Pinder for life! Churchwarden, moreover, with a clear mind till the parson ups and bids me turn to God. Turn to God! says I, 'tis for Him to turn to me, as the Testament doth prove; and I never went near his church from Hocktide unto Candlemas. That learned him, likely; and no judgment yet for all my eighty years. No, no, cleave to the sheep, boy, and the sheep will cleave to you. There's safety in sheep, and a bulging stocking 'gainst the rheumatics. And when your day comes, as come mine must, take to your bed, boy, and face the wall like a stolid Christian man. Say good-bye to the door while she knows ye; ye'll go out feet foremost next move. There's the wisdom of my ancientry; walk you in it.

NEANIAS

I am young and lusty; I believe I am shapely. I would like to court a maid.

GERON

Breed, boy, breed, there's maids a plenty. Yet the world will give you no better than the forge at the brook's head. I took my wife at thy age off the land — a chubby-faced

lass with as pretty a trick of the head, in the way of tossing, as ever a man saw, and all the coaxing motions of a hunching shoulder proper for courtship and lingering by stiles. The world might have given me those same frailties; but would it 'a' given grass to march wi' mine, an' a sheep-dip cut an' going, an' a score fine-fleeced lambs, an' a hand at a black-pudding equal to your grandam's, boy? It would not. And she took me willing, and reared thy father and thy four uncles and seven aunts, boy! And my acres grew and my breeches pocket grew without foot set beyond the parish boundary.

NEANIAS

Didst thou never dream, grandfather, in thy youth? O' nights when the moon is yellow and lieth low down, and the wind a getting? Didst thou never hear the world calling thee over the moor?

GERON

Why, to be plain, boy, I never did. Gossip o' the country! Gossip o' the country! You sit too much with the women; they tell tales over the fire. Once I dreamed a dream that

a man sold wool by the quart. But I'd had liquor that night; and so I had.

NEANIAS

Over the ridge there is a tarn, and by the tarn are seven trees. Men call their names the Seven Sisters. And nights o' the year you may hear them sing — as I have heard them sing.

GERON

Thy mother hath black hair, and a neck all too white for a cottager's woman. 'Tis where thy brown skin came from, for we're all red folk in the valley — red, and speedy frecklers; and here art thou like a gipsy's minion! Thy father went into the world to get her, without leave o' mine. 'Tis said she's sea-bred: sure enough 'twas a fearsome night o' rain and wind that he brought her home, and sea-birds round the house screeching the dark through. And this is some fantasy of hers, to set thy silly head swimming. If thou art for a wedding, boy, go not into the world for a white-neckt woman. Choose for a broad chest and freckly cheeks like a plainish man if you want your childer straight and long i' the back.

NEANIAS

From the tarn falls a brook over boulders and moss, down the dip of the moor. Follow it faithfully, you enter the Forest at the thicket corner: with five miles more you are in the reedy places where Merrow meets the sea.

GERON

May be so, may be so. I never saw it. I've heard tell of such places. A fine country for a beast pasture, saltings and slob-lands.

NEANIAS

I was there once, two summers agone, in daylight. But night would be the time. If you dared! If you dared! So still and warm! Oh, there's mystery somewhere.

GERON

Ay, ay. A mastery of sleep is upon me now.

NEANIAS

I would not say I had purposed to go the full way: I know not what I had purposed; but I got up the mountain edge, and from the top saw the world stretcht out — cornlands and forest, the river winding among meadow-

flats, and right off, like a hem of the sky, the moving sea, with snatches of foam, and large ships reaching forward, out-bound. And then I thought no more, but my heart leapt to meet the wind, and I ran, and I ran. I felt my legs under me, I felt the wind buffet me, hit me on the cheek; the sun shone, the bees swept past me singing; and I too sang, shouted, World, world, I am coming! Thus I came to the Tarn and saw the Seven Sisters. The Tarn was fretted with little bright waves that lapt shortly on the stones; the Seven Sisters dipt and bowed their heads to me till I loved them. I loved them well, but never stayed till I was down the edge and in the deep forest. It was all husht and dark. You saw no sun, but only shafts of blue light running up among the great trees; and you heard the wind a very long way off rush over from the sea to the hills. There were no birds' voices; not a foot crusht the beech-mast but mine. Methought the tall trees stood round me like God. But though a man may love God he dare hardly breathe before Him; and so was I, alone among the watchful trees. Thus endured a time of trembling and expectation, I know not how long. Then I thought something stirred; I

stood heart in mouth, peering through the trees. The quiet about me while I listened was terrible: I could hear my own heart. Grandfather, you are asleep; you are not listening to me.

GERON

Nay, nay, I can hear ye. 'Tis quiet, ye say. So 'tis, so 'tis: a wonderful quiet night. And a smell o' rain. But quiet!

NEANIAS

There was truly something not far off, grandfather! Something grieving and fighting with itself, out of breath, panting and crying in a whisper. I dared not move.

GERON

Quite right, boy, quite right. Never move for anybody when you've got the chimney-corner.

NEANIAS

I could see nothing! I was dizzy with the terror; knew not what it meant, nor why the trees so weighed upon my soul. Then, while I waited, I did see something, for a second of time, by a riven ash. I saw a face. Sickly white, with eyes astare and a round and open mouth. This was a young face,

the face of a girl framed in streaming hair. Her mouth made a black O, as if she would scream, but no sound came at all. Then she panted short and was lost behind the tree trunks. She came in a flash and was gone in a flash; and I heard rain pattering on the leaves up above, and the wood grew very dark. I was suddenly cold: there was no friendliness in the world for me. For look! I had seen horrible pain; cruelty somewhere; lovely cruelty. And as I thought of it I seemed to see the thing again, speechless and scared, and off I ran, blindly forward, as I have never run before (following the gallop of my thought), headlong, without breath or glance to right or left, until I gained the skirt of the deep wood. The storm was over; the sun shining red in the West; and behold! through a rift in the trees the salt sea but a mile away, so you could almost hear the breakers crash, see the rocks shine with the wet, and the birds wheel and pounce.

GERON (*starting*)

Stop your chatter, stop your chatter! Pounce o' birds! Look at the dog. Did ye hear the old bell-wether stamp?

NEANIAS

Yes, yes, I heard him. What's that sound by the running water? Little voices! Oh, they call me; oh, they call me! Lady, I am coming, lady, lady!

GERON

Stop your blether an' nonsense, and listen to the lead o' the sheep. D'ye hear them now?

NEANIAS

They are scattering wide, grandfather. Sure, someone will be driving them.

GERON

Do I smell a fox? Do I smell a fox?

NEANIAS

I smell no fox.

GERON

Then it'll be Mopsus' young dog as likely as nonsense. He was a wild one from the first. Go you down and see, boy. Kep will fetch the sheep home. Kep'll twist his neck!

NEANIAS

Yes, I must go. Of course I must go, for I am called. They are calling me from the top o' the moor.

GERON

If sheep stealing's in the wind, 'tisn't you nor me they're calling, my lad: that's sure and certain as our hope and election. Get you down now, and go steady. You've young wind and I've little or none; so I'll just warm the other shank and get a spell o' sleep. A man may do wi'out a wife (and I better than most), but he must sleep if he would wake. Ye may journey the world over, but ye'll find no better thing. Get down the moor, boy, get ye down the moor.

(GERON *sleeps.*)

NEANIAS (*to his dog*)

Kep, go you down and fold the sheep; I've other work on hand. It's now or never, and I must go. Bountiful God knows the end of this. I've heard tell the Mistress o' the Green Wood is abroad at this hour and may be discerned to flit across the grass rides betwixt the shelving trees. Now I

shall see the white face again. I will kiss sorrow from the open mouth. Yes, yes, Lady, I am surely coming. Ride, Moon, through your silver brake; discourse, O stars, of high ventures, while I fare forth into the lovely hidden world.

(NEANIAS *climbs the hill.*)

END OF SCENE I.

SCENE SECOND

A Heath on the Hill-Top.

Enter NEANIAS.

NEANIAS

THIS is a large country whose very breathing may be discerned and her life known in the floating leagues of air. Yonder, but how far, is a rim of white light! There must be a city there. A city! There are many such places, though never seen by me. I mind long ago there was a traveller came with a pack, and departed again for the city. Maybe yonder is the city. Eighty-four miles he must travel afoot; at dusk he

started before moonrise, pointing the streak of a road that ran before him eighty-four miles. This road drave straight between the high hills, and up and down till it cut a cleft in the sky line, like a bite out of a pear, and went on. He told me he must be gone fifteen miles ere he slept, through hill and brake, through deep-set hedges and stone walls dividing the pastures, and husht pine-woods; and then out on the bare moors where the scritch-owls quest at night and the goat-sucker purrs as she flits by. Once he must smell the sea through Roaring Gap and see the Skiver Beacon alight; but the hills would close over him again, and nothing but stars above him and the patch of dusty road for his eyes to see; and darkness clinging round him like the curtain of your bed. Eighty-four miles before the city come, and his own firelight through the casement. Ah, to be a traveller! . . . . It is bad for a young man never to have seen a city; it hath a shameful sound when the girls ask me Sunday after Sunday, Have I been to town? And I say, Nay. They laugh, and I grow hot and feel younger than I really am. Why should they call me boyish names when I am a man? I have the motions of a man, yet

never courted a maid, nor spoke with one of such things as men and maids speak of when they are alone. What things these are I should not know had not Merla told me. I have spoken long and earnestly with Merla; I think she understands me. She said she did the other day, and I believe her. I am bolder now. This night hath prickt my courage. I shall meet with strange folk; I shall herd in new pastures; I shall herd with men and maids. Specially will I herd with the maids. A certain foresight doth bear me company in this business. A little further on there will be a grassy place near the Tarn. There, where should be trees, by the light of the moon you shall see ladies sitting in a half-ring, very quiet, hands on chins, eyes outward set to the weather until I come. When I come I will be bold, without pertness I will be bold. Cap in hand, making a good leg, I step forward. "Ladies," I will say, or "Pretty ladies," or (as a man of the world might say) "My pretty ladies" — how then? "Pretty ladies"? No, no. "Ladies"? Well then; Ladies, I am a servant of her you serve. You serve the Mistress of the Green Wood. I serve her from afar off. Your lives are

done in secret, seen of a few among the many who have business (though they know it not) in your realm — fools! who look upon your Tarn as a hole full of water, upon your Forest as a clustering of green stocks, upon your wild moor under driving clouds as devilish bleak lodging; who see the pasty in a flock of birds, and holloa for the hounds when they descry the lagging fox. Ladies, I am not as one of these. Sweet Lord! how I have peered for your footprints, listened for your idlest whisper, fallen down at your faint appearance. For this land to me is full of voices, rumours, and the assured breath of your unseen presence. Knowing you not I have loved you, and discerning you not have felt you near at hand. And now that we are face to face, my face to all of yours, tell me, I pray you, how I may become a seer. Tell me now the mystery of the miracle I saw in the wood — the open mouth of the affrighted child; the hidden torturer, who he was; the meaning of cruel hands at work in the deep wood. And guide me to your dwelling, touch me here and there that I become wise, kiss me and seal knowledge unto me, as I would kiss in turn and seal my life to yours. In this high

strain, but much more eloquently, I would speak with the seated ring of ladies. And having said my say, I would stand easily with a hand to my hip, until one, the tallest and fairest, should advance and kiss me lightly on the cheek. So I would kiss again in most friendly and courteous fashion, and she, taking me by the hand, would lead me to join the ring. There would be calls for music, and I should doubtless take out my oaten pipe and set them a-dancing. Anon one would take the pipe from me, that I might dance with the tall and fair lass; and dance, you may depend, I should, and never tire at all, nor sweat, as in our village dances we use. After that I know not well what should happen; but of this I am certain, by some means I should become initiate — drinking mayhap of the Tarn water out of a speckled fern leaf, possibly biting some sweetish root, or swallowing a potion compounded of herbs and simples which they had pluckt under the new moon. Oh, there are ways! Well I know it. I will advance therefore, nothing doubted. Yet my heart beats masterfully: I hear a knocking at my ribs. God's love, what is that crying about me?

VOICES (*without*)

Come, come away;
Come, come away!

NEANIAS

Hark, O hark, the night is awake.

VOICES (*without*)

Follow me over the moor!
Come away, come away!

NEANIAS

The night is awake, the night is awake! Hush! Now silence is deep and wide: down in the valley a sheep-bell fitfully stirs; a dog is baying the moon. Hark, will she speak again? Lady, lady!

VOICES (*nearer*)

The moor, the moor, come over the moor!
Come, child, who art out of the world
And would be a child no more.

NEANIAS

Oh, they are very near! Should I pray? Should I pray? I have a fear on me because of the night chills. Ah, ah, they are here!

Ah, ah, Mother of Saints, there is the face of the child!

(THE EARTH DAUGHTERS *appear; five with joined hands dance round* AGLAË, *while one sings to a three-stringed lyre. They sing by turns, passing the lyre from one to another.* AGLAË'S *head is bent and her hands clasp't.* SITYS *sings first.*)

SITYS

The moon is over firs, the fox is abroad —
Come, come away!
The partridge calls from the corn that her mate come home
From the new-cut swathes of hay:
Come, come, come away!
This is the hour for the Sister Queens of the moor
To caper and play.
Dark muffles the cote, the herds grumble asleep,
Not a footfall stirs in the way
Of the village: come, come away!

(*She gives place to* GEËRNA.)

GEËRNA

I started a huddled doe where she slept blinking her ears:

Ho! She leapt in a fright,
Shaking, and fled; the stamp of her trepitant
feet
Shockt the velvety night,
And the rim of her eye flared white!
Light as a hare I gave chase thro' bramble
and glade,
Thro' shallow and bight,
Where the warm sand lips on the frith; sob-
bing she fell —
O but her blood was bright
And Earth greedy this night!

(*She gives place to* PHŒNO.)

PHŒNO

I couchéd in reeds and heard the sough of
the wind,
The wash of the tide
Rising and falling, rising and falling ever.
As the salt flow brimméd wide
The reeds shivered and sighed;
And the great Night lay abroad like an ocean
of dark
Still, till the heron cried
Out at his fishing alone; then I piped to my-
self,
But the melody faltered and died
When the moon silvered the tide.

(*She gives place to* DRYAS.)

DRYAS

I stood hid to the flanks in the thick of the fern
As the tired day fell,
Washing my body in blood shed by the sun:
In the hush of my spell
My voice chimed like a bell,
As I sang, as I sang of the long peace of the woods.
Like a miracle,
All in a golden cloud, my hair floated and spread,
And the dusk lovéd well
My bosom's sinking and swell.

(*She gives place to* EROTION.)

EROTION

As a hawk I sped down the moor to the sleep-smothered flock
For love of a boy;
And I girded myself with the new-slain pelt of a fox,
And the hunter's joy,
And the flush of a maid's decoy.
The sheep fled leaping for fear as I bayed of the wolf

In the light of the moon.
For, oh, we are wild for loving or hating, and soon
Like a mystic rune
Worketh our plenilune.

(*She gives place to* ADORA.)

ADORA

I am the Morning Calm and the smile of me is like sleep
Even and deep;
And my eyes are twin mountain lakes, and the lashes of them
Like the swishing sedge
That hideth the water's edge.
I float on the white water ere daylight begins
Or the moon grows wan,
And I spin at a loom the life of the day to come,
A little span,
The day of the life of man.

(*She joins the dancers' ring.*)

NEANIAS (*watching* AGLAË)

She is among them, yet speaks not; she has no song to utter; her feet are heavy because her heart is heavy; she is burdened

beyond her strength and the slightness of her years. What should I do? What would a man do in such a pass as this?

EROTION (*spying him*)

Sisters, he is here! Sisters, he is here!

(*She stops dancing and points him out.*)

NEANIAS

Oh, no, no, no!

EROTION

Are you shy, my brown boy? You are brown as a nut, a ripe nut, king of a cluster. Behold, I pluck you out by the hand. Come and talk to me.

(*She drags him forward.*)

NEANIAS

What's your will, lady?

EROTION

Come, come away;
Come, come, come away!
We have hunted this night,
O sisters, daughters of Earth,
We have found! Come, let us play!
To the Tarn. to the Tarn, come away!

ALL (*save* AGLAË)

We ride at our will o'er the bonny wild moor,
Air is our fee, and the deep brake our demesne,
Come, come away! Come, come away!

(*They drag* NEANIAS *after them laughing.*)

END OF SCENE II.

SCENE THIRD

The Top of the Moor: The Tarn with the Seven Sisters.

THE DAUGHTERS OF EARTH *sit in a half-circle on the grass.* NEANIAS *stands before them sheepishly.*

SITYS

SISTERS, we have never had a mortal so close to us before. Look at him well.

ADORA

He is a pretty youth.

GEËRNA

Mortals have but a short time to live; let us look at him while the bloom is on him.

I have seen a dead mortal — faugh! I like not such clods.

DRYAS

Brown boy, I see the red blood under your skin.

PHŒNO

O brown boy, what are you watching with your sharp eyes?

DRYAS

Look, look, his chin is sharper than his eyes.

PHŒNO

There is down on his lip.

EROTION

There is none.

PHŒNO

That dark rim is down.

EROTION

It is none.

PHŒNO

Kiss him and see.

SITYS

We will all kiss him anon.

DRYAS

All of us, all of us!

EROTION

None of you shall kiss him: he is mine.

GEËRNA

His eyes are long and something narrow: he looks sly.

ADORA

He is blushing now: he is a pretty youth.

PHŒNO

But backward. He has never loved a girl, I am sure.

EROTION

He will love me.

SITYS

The short frock sits well upon him.

DRYAS

Oh, his neck shoots up like a pine stem! His head is smallish and round as a puff ball.

GEËRNA

Then his hat is like a toadstool, casting deep shade.

ADORA

He is well enough. Can you speak, boy?

NEANIAS

Yes, mistress, I can speak.

GEËRNA

Why did you come up hither in the dark?

NEANIAS

I don't know.

SITYS

How old are you?

NEANIAS

Eighteen, come Saint Lucy's day.

PHŒNO

You are not very forward for that. I had thought mortal youths more prompt with maidens.

SITYS

Is that your sheep-crook? Can you not drive sheep without a stick and a dog? We are apter herds than you then. Let me look at this crook.

(*She takes it.* DRYAS *touches his smock.*)

NEANIAS (*to* DRYAS)

Ah, you should leave me alone, mistress.

DRYAS

May I not touch you? I like you well.

EROTION

The boy is mine. He is mine. What is your name, boy of mine?

NEANIAS

Neanias, please you, ma'am.

EROTION

So you have sought to know us, Neanias? You have peered for our footprints, listened to our idlest whisper, fallen at our faint appearance — hey? You would be initiate — hey? Toucht here and there? Guided and kist? You meant to speak eloquently, Neanias, and you say nothing. Come, you shall know us all, and then we will dwell together for a season, you and I, Neanias, you and I! Look now, I take your hand: you are not afraid?

NEANIAS

No, no. I think I am not afraid.

EROTION

Well, leave your hand where it is, then. Come, sisters, and greet your servant.

NEANIAS

I am no one's servant.

EROTION

You are my servant. Come, sisters.

GEËRNA (*coming forward*)

I, who am called Thirsty Corn-Ear, who dwell in the red wheat and love most the rain, kiss you, Neanias, and bid you welcome.

PHŒNO (*coming forward in turn*)

I am Tang of the Loam, and couch in sweet corners of earth, watching the clover creep to the light. And I kiss your cheek and bid you welcome, Neanias.

SITYS

My laughing is lighter than the leap of a squirrel, and brighter than the sun on yellow leaves. I love good cheer and warm woods: I am very kind. I suckle the young fauns that I bear to my Lord the goat-shankt. I am

Bonny Beech Mast and kiss you welcome, O Neanias.

DRYAS

I am Dryas, Crown o' the Oak, youngest but one of the Seven Sisters. I am too wild to be foster-mother of fauns. I love all, but choose none. Chiefest I love the Sun, and the Sun me. If I have a master it is the Sun. I kiss you, Neanias, and you may kiss me.

ADORA (*who remains seated*)

Come here, boy, and listen, for I go out to no man; but whoso needeth me seeketh. I, who am Morning Calm, suffer you, being young flesh as yet, to be welcome to our sanctuary. Stoop down your cheek, that I may kiss you free.

EROTION

Listen now to me, Neanias, listen well. I am Warmth of the Earth, and must love furiously. Many I have loved and with kindness; but I favour not all, and favour singly. I brook no refusals: I am a Queen. I serve but whom I have pleasure in, and I will keep my lovers close. I am jealous, Neanias, but am I not lovely and pleasant? You I marked

as you tended your master's herds, and desired your young blood to enrich and deepen the dye of it. In your two eyes I would mirror myself and my long delights. I would take you between my breasts and teach you understanding and knowledge and the cunning of the ways of Earth. I do not kiss your cheek as my sisters have done: I kiss your two lips, Neanias, and bid you come. Do you come not? I am unused to vain asking.

NEANIAS (*pointing to* AGLAË)

What of her? Who is she?

DRYAS

That is Aglaë. Shepherd, do you pipe?

NEANIAS

Yes, young mistress, and with the best.

SITYS

What can you play on your pipe?

NEANIAS

I can play "Jog on my knee," and "Send Phyllis to me," and "When the Corn is high O," and other roundelays and country

songs. Will she not speak to me? Is she proud?

DRYAS

Yes, she is proud. But she cannot speak to you: she is dumb.

NEANIAS

Ah, but — she could welcome me without any speeches.

SITYS

O no, no! She is cold, icy cold!

PHŒNO

Nay, let her come.

EROTION

She shall not come! he shall not look at her. She is not for him and he is not for her. She is for One, and he is mine.

ADORA

Her time is not yet come; but it shall come soon. Hither, Aglaë. (AGLAË *rises from her seat. Her hands are crost on her bosom.*) Kiss her cheek, shepherd boy.

(NEANIAS *kisses her cheek.*)

NEANIAS

O fie! She is stone cold!

EROTION

She is not for thee, and thou art not for her. Thou art mine. Come.

(*She takes his hand.*)

NEANIAS

Stay a little, stay a little.

EROTION

I cannot stay. There is no time. My time is short.

NEANIAS

What is this, your time is short?

EROTION

See, low down over the furthest fell three stars that make an arrow-head. Or ever they prick the edge I must go, my reign is over. One calls me.

NEANIAS

What is this?

EROTION

We are rulers of the watches of the night. Mine is now, and soon will be done. Come, Neanias, and play with me. I love you, Neanias.

NEANIAS

Tell me more of Aglaë, or I come not.

EROTION

I will tell you no more.

ADORA

She is youngest of us all and was a rebel. He whom we should serve knew her not and chased her long through the Green Wood. Then she prayed to the Earth Mother, upon whose breasts she had suckt for six years, that she would keep her inviolate, which our Mother did by casting chill upon her; so He who loveth warm cheer only was repulsed, and yet is. But He struck her dumb in His resentment, and kept her enchained until another should do off the spell in time to come. And the terror thereof yet endures upon her, so that at certain seasons she fendeth with her hands and maketh to shriek with her mouth (yet no

words to be discerned of any), thinking the dread of that spell still about her. And He hath forbidden her the knowledge of love or the desire of it, notwithstanding to all Daughters of Earth love is life and breath and feeding and drinking, until her time is ripe. So she is Virgin Dawn.

EROTION

O peace, Sister! Come, Neanias, and love me.

NEANIAS

Hold you there, Mistress, hold you there. You have said enough. Set back, set back. So this is she whom I saw in shock and desolation, this cold and pitiful-staring maid! Dumb, dumb, dumb! and cold as the dead — O my dear! O the poor child! Up, Neanias, and show thy mettle, learn by teaching, friend. She may not love? Teach her to love thee and thou shalt thyself learn loving. She is dumb? Woo her, Neanias, till she speak to thee of the love thou hast awarded her, lest she die of too much repression of love. This is fate, this is thy fate and calling, boy. Set on then

and shame the Devil. Ho, there! Listen, O strange ladies. You are free and vagrant as the air is; but your speech and conversation are not for shepherds. I love you not. You, Mistress Thirsty Corn-Ear, are too masterful. Maybe 'tis your thirstiness should be blamed, I cannot tell. But among men it is not used that the woman is master. I do not see you a-spinning me hosen, nor mending my torn smocks, nor washing me breeches. You are over tall and bold for a shepherd's mate; I choose not for you. You, Tang o' the Loam, are brown and winsome; but you love sleep too well on your own declaration. You would be for ever in the ingle-nook, and where should I look for my supper then? I pass you by. Little Mistress Dryas, Crown o' the Oak, with your slim neck and hair fanned out in a cloud, you are like a Saint in Glory. You seem in wonder at your own beauty; and so far well. But you have sought more of me than a maid should. You would scare the parson from his pulpit and set the women fighting. I cannot figure you in a Sunday gown, which we look to see touch the ground at one end and the chin at the other. Your own, lady, is a thought too scanty for our

taste. Take your joy of the Sun, Mistress, I have no quarrel with him there. Pretty Sitys, Bonny Beech-Mast, I think you are kind as you are comely. Yet you are a laugher, and I fear you wanton. Who is Goat-Shanks? A man should have a grave-eyed wife, for our world, look you, is not always so gay. No, no. I like you well enough, but I may not have you. Lady Morning Calm, I look the less at you as I fear you the more. You have a strange smile, terribly sweet. You are too high for a shepherd lad; but I doff my cap to you.

EROTION

You are for me then!

NEANIAS

Nay, ma'am, I am for Aglaë.

(*He takes* AGLAË *by the hand.*)

THE SIX OTHERS

She is banned, you dare not! She is banned, you will rue it!

NEANIAS

I dare do all that a man may dare for the maid he chooseth to wife.

THE SIX

Away, away! Seek Pan. Pan will avenge.

NEANIAS

Aglaë, come with me.

(*He leads her away.*)

THE SIX

She goeth. Away! Pan, Pan!

(*Exeunt severally.*)

END OF SCENE III.

SCENE FOURTH

Another part of the moor, looking over the valley.

Enter NEANIAS *carrying* AGLAË. *He sets her on a fallen tree and stands looking at her.*

NEANIAS

SHE keeps her eyes fixt on me: I think she is going to cry. The corners of her mouth are down — a bad sign. Her lips cling loosely together — a worse. She hath grey eyes — how deep and soft! How far-searching! How seeming to ask for help of me, like a dumb beast's! And her lips are cold; and she is dumb! What should a man do with a girl at such a time? Put his arm about her, doubtless, and give her a kiss, or kisses. There is that upon her which forbids a careless handling. Besides — oh, it would be merciless! I have heard that of old time the squire knelt before his lady to kiss her hand, or even her foot. Shall I salute her so? I have her hand, and can see her sandall'd foot, with the little

toes like wind-flowers peeping up through the herbage. The hand is nearer; I will kiss her hand. How small, how warm, how gentle a hand! Her cheek was cold as a stone — to be warmed some day by my fire! I have warmed her hand a'ready in mine: let me warm the other. (*He has both her hands.*) Oh, Aglaë, you are trembling! What's the matter, my dear? Art cold, art afraid, wistful, Aglaë? Why, girl, thou hast a lover, a sweetheart; is it nothing to thee? Never a lass yet but hugged the darling thought, if the wisdom of man speaks true. Cheer then, cheer then, pretty maid, for I at least will be true. Ah, ah! You cast down your eyes at that; 'fore God, you blush — O Aglaë, how soft-cheekt you are! But I say it again, I will be your true man, even as my father that is dead loved my mother whom he stole from a country far from here and taught the use of love in a quiet valley. She was a sea-bred woman, black-haired, swan-neckt, and knew nothing of sheep or husbandry. But my father taught her all that, and she loves him yet though he lies with a broken back deep under Church mould. Even as my father was to her, so to you will I be, girl: even

so. Ah, Saints, she looketh up again, with beseeching and with dumb prayer! Do her lips move? No sound, no sound at all! She must speak to me; she shall speak. Look, Aglaë, do as I do; move your lips now as I move mine. Now thus: tongue to palate, that is L. Yes, yes. Open lips to form broad O, full as my heart. Wider yet, and fuller: L, O! Now lower lip to upper teeth for V, and E as mute as you. Do it now. It is done! That is LOVE, Aglaë, that is LOVE! . . . Aglaë, I will kneel before you and ask you — stay with me! Look, now, I have come over the hills for you, braving dangers, my word! and fatigues, and uncertain powers, possibly of the Devil. Stay with me. Your eyes are soft and very gentle, yet wide with waiting for fear: narrow them that peace may come in. Do you fear? You cannot fear me. Look at me, Aglaë — are you afraid? You shake your head: you are not! Then I will tell you more. I am here and you are here, none beside us, we two in the open world. Oh, my dear, I love you well! The danger and sick dread are going with the night; soon you and the day will smile together. The sun will touch the hill-tops, and race down

the flanks of the high hills. He will kindle the trees in the valley, and we shall see his light, and the blue smoke make a spire to God. With a wakened world, the sounds of men and business about us, all will be well. The ringing anvil at the forge, the wash of the mill-wheel, the humming where the wheat is a-threshing, and Merla calling the cows — day will come, day will come! Hark, is that the priest's bell? Not yet, not yet: courage, wait awhile, soon will be a wedding, and a bride carried over the threshold to the hearth! You the bride, Aglaë, Virgin Dawn; and I the groom, I, Neanias son of Balkis. The folk will line the church-way, strowing flowers and branches; the men will follow you with their eyes, and the women say, "The sturdy lad!" — of me whom hitherto they have counted a baby, to talk their freedoms before me without a blush! Sturdy enough. For though I am slim built I am very strong, and could carry you, Aglaë, under my arm. My arm round your middle, I would carry you over brooks in flood, and up the moor-side on dewy mornings lest you should wet your pretty toes. In the orchards I could hold you up to gather the codlings and peach-apples from

the midmost branches. There should no brambles tear you, and no thistle-spines, nor sword-grass that cuts like a saw. Oh, I would tend you well, Aglaë, and love you dearly! The homestead should flow with milk and honey: I would get you the first-lings of the year, apples and quinces and mellow pears. Fine wool should be your bed clothes, all of first-shear lambs: you should be drest in white wool and thin flax. My mother, you must know, is a cunning woman, deft with her fingers, and her spinning well known in our valley and beyond the high hills. Fear not to tear your hands or harden them with coarse work; fear not to line your pale and gentle face with dark thoughts or cares; fear not to drudge, fear nothing. I am with you, Aglaë: I will teach you love; and love, say they, is life. Happy love, therefore, is blessed life. . . . O Aglaë, will you cry again? Sure, you cannot see me for tears. You tremble again, your lips quiver, sobs are in your throat. Your head on my shoulder, dear: there, that's happy, that's happy. Oh, what a beating heart! Look now, Aglaë, cry your fill; don't be ashamed — I am not looking at you. I felt a tear on my arm; I know

your eyes are brimming. Cry, cry, my bird, you will be better after. Have no fear, I hold you close — side to side: we will be nearer yet — heart to heart some day. Ah, ah, you are mine! I have made you mine. And I am a man by now, and you are mine, and mine, and mine, and my wife for ever! Come, Aglaë, away. Come! . . . See, Aglaë, the white dawn steals round the rim of the world: soon spears of fire will spike the East. Virgin Dawn, this is the day, this is our wedding day. Hark! what is that far off and below us in the haze? The priest's bell, by our Lord's joy! Sir Topas at his Mass. Come, my bride, my well-beloved! Come, heart of mine, to whom love draws near. Let us seek Sir Topas at the altar rail. Dawn! Dawn!

(*He takes her hand; they go down the moor-side together. Day-break.*)

END OF SCENE IV.

SCENE FIFTH

Geron's Cottage Door. Early Morning.

BALKIS *stands at the door, looking down the road.* MERLA *sits on the step with her face between her knees.*

MERLA

O MOTHER of Heaven! O crowned Son! Was ever such a night since I was born? Late loved, earlier lost is a true word. Mother, I would die!

BALKIS

No need to die for my son, Merla. He will come in his time as he went in his time.

MERLA

If he does not come I must surely die, Mistress Balkis.

BALKIS

A girl should not say she will die for a man, unless —

MERLA

Mistress Balkis, I will tell you sober truth. He has never cast an eye upon me. Do you think I would weep so free if he were by? My tongue would blister in my mouth. But to you I may say more than to most. I will tell you what my own sister guesses not, bedfellow of mine though she be.

BALKIS

I see my father on the road.

MERLA

Oh, oh! Alone?

BALKIS

The dog is with him. My father walks as a tired man, looking neither at the weather nor the hill-side where the sheep lie.

MERLA

Then he has found no trace; then Nan is lost to me.

BALKIS

To you, girl? Well!

MERLA

O Mistress Balkis, may I tell you more?

Do I dare? He is gone, he is gone! I may tell you now. Oh. Balkis, I loved him so dear!

BALKIS

Well.

MERLA

He never lookt at me save to bid "Good morning," or "Good night," or "Save you, Merla," as he past. Once only he kist me fairly — o' Christmas Eve. We were pulling raisins from the Snapdragon bowl, and I took one between my teeth and dared him pull it out wi' his'n. 'Twas done o' purpose, Balkis, and it answered, for I began it. I may surely tell you now he is dead and gone. How do I know the mistletoe didn't mind him of a lad's duty? He never noticed me again, though I took a dozen raisins up an' dared him every one. I had to swallow 'em down, and might 'a' chokt before he'd save me from untimely death. Ah, I was nothing to him, an' he never knew what he was to me, nor cared — never! But I knew where he went from dawn to dusk: I could not let him alone. When he lay out in the meadows with the sheep I was near, croucht on knees to watch him lie. When the noon was fierce

he would lie down by the burn and dip his cheeks in the water. I was there, and praying I might be water. Times again he would strip and stand thigh-deep in the pool, or swim there at his ease. My heart stood still, my legs were as water: but not of the brook, Mistress Balkis, not of the brook! I watcht him home by the light of the hunter's moon, and have markt how tired he would be; his limbs would lag: he is over long for his years and wearies soon. When he has piped he has thought himself alone; but I was there. I would have danced with him till I dropt. When he was sleepy, I would have pillow'd him on my lap. I have lain awake o' nights, and called his name softly to myself, trilled it over my lips thus — Neanias! Nan, my Nan! The girls all call him Nan for his meek looks. Oh, oh! And I watch him at church, too; sharing books my hand hath doddered like a shaking poplar. His name is scored on many a tree; but deep it is scored in my heart, Mistress, deep it is notcht in my heart! I look at myself in the glass, and sicken with scorn. "Thou blistered wretch," I say, "thou freckled toad, shall the like of him look upon thee? He, so clear of skin, so

nut-brown, so clear-ruddy in the cheek! He to bend his proud head that the black curls meet thy flaunting mane, meet and mingle! He, supple and clean as a sapling birch, to take thee, thou suet-face?" So I go on, mad at my own gross habit: but I love him, shadow him, think day and night upon him. Do I do a wrong, Mistress Balkis, in speaking of this? I am lusty as a steer; I could carry him up the fell on my back; I have forty gold sovereigns in my mother's broken tea-pot; I look better when I'm drest for Church; I can kill a pig; I would lay down my life for him! Oh, oh, oh! Speak to me for Heaven's pity.

BALKIS

His time is not yet, Merla. He is full young to marry. And he may look where his father did. I cannot tell! (*To* GERON.) You are tired, my father, and tired in vain.

(*Enter* GERON.)

GERON

I've been up Bartle Fell an' over Powdermat Edge without sight of a hoping soul.

Far over by the Windy Knole I saw three crows wheeling in air, an' thither I went with my stomach turning me green. 'Twas nought but a still-born lamb they were after. But the boy was my lamb, daughter, and it might 'a' been he. What should rive him sudden in the open moor, you would say? The act o' God! The act o' God! A jealous God, they tell me; and He must 'a' known I was wrapt up in the lad; He couldn't but 'a' known it. I never hid it from no one.

MERLA

God Almighty never took him, Master Geron. 'Tis no mischief of His making. Oh, my heart, my heart, torn to pieces!

BALKIS

Come, father, and eat your meat. He is nearer kin to me than to you.

GERON

You were always a strange silent woman, daughter; a deep one, a proud thinker. You should weep, you should heartily weep. But you drive your sorrow inward till it freezes your blood.

MERLA

My sorrow leapeth like a swollen water. Oh, oh, oh!

BALKIS

Tush. The boy lives.

GERON

If your heart tells you that, pray God it doth not lie.

BALKIS

The heart never lies. 'Tis the head devises the lying.

MERLA

My heart is broken in bits.

GERON

Ah, then there's one will lie no more. Who is this! Old Teucer? Speak, Teucer, I am ready for the worst to fall.

(*Enter* TEUCER.)

TEUCER

Master Geron, Mistress Balkis, young female, the mill-dam is clear of mortal substance.

GERON

Then, by Jack in the Box, the lad liveth!

TEUCER

Lord, that was a tasty swear!

GERON

I past the mill pool, but I would not look. I dared not. I mind when I was a lad how Stephen's young wife threw herself in a Hallowmas night. The water suckt her down and spewed her up against the sluice before my open eyes. "Morning, Mistress," I says, as up she bobbed, for I thought she was in for the pastime. But she lookt at me with a staring white eye, an' I saw what she was. Ah, an' I've seen her since! O' nights when there'd be a moon. A bodeful place.

(*Enter* MOPSUS *and* SPHORX.)

MOPSUS

Servant, Madam Balkis.

SPHORX

Servant, again, Ma'am.

MOPSUS

'Tis a gay morning, Ma'am; but this world is full of dreariment.

TEUCER

Ah, friends and relations, there must be tribulation.

MOPSUS

One first, then the other; so runs the wheeling world.

TEUCER

We must be as corn to the flail!

MOPSUS

Sifted as wheat!

TEUCER

Throughly purged!

MOPSUS

Lord, how we must be purged!

SPHORX

Ere day dawn I knew it must come. Says I to my old girl, "Old girl" —

MOPSUS

Ah, he did, he did that! I heard him speak, an' I heard her answer him short.

TEUCER

What did she say, master?

MOPSUS

"Dam fool," says she; an' he said no more.

SPHORX

Such a dawning was never known. From the grey in the West to the hot blush of the East, signs and wonders and portents and terrific alarms! Moving flocks of white sea-birds flying low, mewing like cats; stars shooting from the sky; voices, apparitions, screaming of women, an' laughing of wanton women! The sheep scared immortally and penned close without a dog! You'd 'a' said a wolf was abroad. There was smell of a fox, and a fox is near enough to a wolf, I hope. A wild night and a wicked morning for a lost boy.

MERLA

Our old sow farrowed in the night o' ten dead piglings before her time was come.

TEUCER

There, there!

SPHORX

Yes, neighbour, this is the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes.

GERON

Lord's doing! Ten dead pigs! Devil's work, depend upon it. Lord's forbearing, I call it.

TEUCER

There was a stranger thing than all, friends and relations. One of the Seven Sisters is down with the wind. She lies athwart a boulder, droopt and broke.

GERON

Wind? wind? There was not enough wind to carry a scent. There wasn't enough wind to curdle a creaming pond.

MOPSUS

Wind or no wind, Geron, the tree is down, for I saw her lying.

GERON

Why do you fash me with your tales of trees and screeching birds? Is this your comfort? I'm an old man, friends, and

broken a'ready by the death of my son's son. I miss the boy sorely, for I know I loved him well.

TEUCER

Ay, ay! He was a likely sprig. Slim an' over-lean, but a pert lad for all.

MOPSUS

Speak him some comfort, Sphorx, speak him some comfort o' Scripture. Warm his heart, Sphorx, for out of the fulness of the heart the mouth speaketh.

SPHORX

So it should, friend, but a' won't.

MOPSUS

May be thou'rt not full enough i' the heart, Sphorx. Hast thou broke thy fast?

SPHORX

Ay, an hour agone. Leave me, it'll come, it's bound to come.

TEUCER

Be bold to speak what you ought to speak, neighbour Sphorx. Cousin o' mine, is Sphorx.

SPHORX

I'm in labour with the Word now, Teucer, and like to deliver.

MOPSUS

'Tis a wonderful man, wisest in the hamlet, saving the parson, who's a man of God and can say what a' liketh. Now, well I remember what he said o' my wedding morn. "Mopsus," a' says, and again, "Mopsus" —

SPHORX

Ho, you there! I have it fast. "He will burn sinners in unmentionable fires."

TEUCER

There, it's out! Isn't he a marvel? Cousin o' mine.

MOPSUS

I love a text o' Scripture for the comfort an' strength of it.

TEUCER

Then Sphorx is your man. Why, what's this? Heavenly Potentates, what's this? (*Pointing down the road.*)

SPHORX

By the Ten Commandments, that's the boy.

BALKIS

Then the time has come.

MERLA

May I hold your hand, Mother?

BALKIS

Yes, child, but I fear for you.

MERLA

Oh, Mother! There's one with him. And he walks before her! She's his woman! He's ringed her!

BALKIS

Like his father before him. Like his father long ago.

GERON (*sitting down*)

What's this they're saying? What does my daughter say?

BALKIS

Neanias is here, father. He is well.

GERON

God is good.

SPHORX

We are all grass, neighbour. Every one of us is grass.

(*Enter* NEANIAS, *followed by* AGLAË.)

NEANIAS (*kneels*)

Mother, bless me. I have brought you a daughter.

MERLA

O heart, O heart, O heart!

BALKIS

My son, be thou blest in all good things. Daughter, come hither.

(AGLAË *kneels to* BALKIS.)

BALKIS

What I know of thee I may not speak. But I know thee and thine, as thou knowest of me and mine. I left my people because I found my master in a man. What thou hast done is for thy man to make just. If he prove thy master it will be well. I kiss your brow, Aglaë, and make you welcome.

NEANIAS (*kneeling to* GERON)

I am here, grandfather.

GERON

Boy, thou hast frighted me, kept me from my lawful bed, and set the neighbours talking. Why hast thou done this?

NEANIAS

I went to fetch home my wife, grandfather.

TEUCER (*to* SPHORX)

Jiggers! his wife.

GERON

Thy wife, boy?

NEANIAS

Yes, sir.

GERON

Let me see thy wife.

NEANIAS

Look, sir, she does her reverence to my mother.

GERON

That slip? 'Tis but a bit of a girl. Thy wife should snood her hair. Her eyes are

over tender for a cottager, an' her mouth seemeth languid and meek, to droop at the corners. Off the land, off the land had been better. Well! Does she speak our tongue?

NEANIAS

I cannot tell you, sir. She is dumb.

GERON

She is dumb? Thou hast taken a dumb wife? Well, well, well! Boy, thou hast a riper judgment than I thought in thee. A dumb wife — well! She hath a pure manner of curtseying, dumb or no. I mind to have seen the like — quick droop and long recovery — times agone past recall. She kisses my daughter's hand, and my daughter receives it like a Queen. Why, woman, woman, dost thou know the lass? Art acquaint?

BALKIS

No, father, but I know of her. Aglaë, yonder is thy man's grandsire. Go, pay him thy reverence.

(AGLAË *crosses and kneels to* GERON.)

GERON

What, on knees, on knees! Nay, child, if Balkis welcomes thee, I may not hold off. There, little maid, little maid, with my hand on thy bright hair I pray God's Mother for thee. Serve thy man meekly, love, honour, obey. Bear the burdens he may put upon thee, they will not be too heavy: and mayst thou live to tell him so. Why, lamb, thou shalt not be mute and be well! A woman must talk. Go to thy master, little lamb, and take a blessing with thee.

(AGLAË *takes* NEANIAS' *hand.*)

NEANIAS

Master Sphorx, this is my wife.

SPHORX

Servant, lady. 'Tis a likely season for the roots, being moisty. Yes, yes. Have I a text? I have. "There is neither speech nor language."

NEANIAS

Too apt, Master Sphorx.

MOPSUS (*to* SPHORX)

The girl's a mute.

SPHORX

Wise virgins! I could not tell that. Tut, tut! I should never have said it.

NEANIAS

Master Teucer, this is my wife.

TEUCER

To know you better, mistress, and a baby on your knee. 'Tis a free-built maid, straight as a pine, and a taking shape.

NEANIAS

Hush, sir.

TEUCER

Lord, she blushes! And I thought she was a mute! I have done ill, friends and relations, and a man can do no more.

NEANIAS

Master Mopsus, this is my wife.

MOPSUS

So I see. Sakes! What to say? Do you repeat your wife, young man?

NEANIAS

I say my wife, Master Mopsus.

MOPSUS

Then I say no more. Was that seemly, Sphorx? Did I well?

SPHORX

Vex me not, Mopsus. Scripture played me false.

MOPSUS

Speak some more.

SPHORX

No more now for my life. Later in the week, later on in the week. Nearer the Sunday. Come away, Mopsus, there will be a wedding feast to do, and high junketing this night. We may be bidden. Then my time will come.

MOPSUS

The boy's to carry her over the threshold, I hope?

TEUCER

Surely, surely, he'll do that.

MERLA (*to* BALKIS)

He does not lead her to me, Mother. Oh, Mother, Mother, I want to cry again!

BALKIS

If thou lovest him, Merla, thou shouldst wish him well.

MERLA

Look, I have fingered her gown. 'Tis of vellum or some undrest skin.

BALKIS

No, girl, it hath a web. Look at the warp, it is a woven piece.

MERLA

It smells of the woods, and again it hath the savour of a sawyer's yard. So, so, Missy, cast not your big eye-shine on me. I will do you no harm. You milk-face, I'll do you none till I see what you are after.

GERON

Come in, friends all, and welcome the pair. Neanias shall carry her over the threshold to the hearth.

SPHORX

We'll do that, neighbour, we'll do that.

(*All go in save* NEANIAS *and* AGLAË.)

NEANIAS

Now, O Bride, we are near one indeed. O my Bride, my fair one, my much desired, has life begun? (*He kisses her.*) Aglaë! the warm blood floweth in your lips again. Life is begun! I will sing you an old song, Aglaë, when evening falls. 'Tis an evening song, too sacred for this place. 'Tis a wedding song for our wedding night, my Bride. Lo, I bear the Bride in my arms, across the threshold of the floor.

(*He carries her over the threshold.*)

END OF ACT THE FIRST.

ACT THE SECOND

ACT THE SECOND

A Stranger herdeth Geron's sheep,
And robs Neanias;
Merla doth give what she could keep,
So cometh speech to pass.

SCENE FIRST

In the cottage. November night.

GERON, SPHORX, TEUCER, MOPSUS, *drinking at a table.* BALKIS *and* MERLA *near them, talking and knitting.* AGLAË *sits apart, sewing, and* NEANIAS *watching her.*

TEUCER

OH friends, is it not well with us o' these days?

GERON

It is well, for beer is always well; and your beer warmed when nights are sharp serves to mind you how shrewish cold the fells should be, and the apples bobbing in the

beer invite a man to be merry. For at such times life goes to a tune.

MOPSUS

Life goes to a tune according as a man is tuneful, hath music. Not otherwise by no means. Sphorx, now, should be ripe wi' tunes like an old organ.

SPHORX (*leaning back*)

My soul is as it were a windy bag; you must jog me ere I sing. I should be squeezed.

GERON

I could 'a' squeezed ye ten year back.

TEUCER

I can pinch ye, Sphorx, if it's only a matter of a nip here and there. Lords! What a knotty thigh. Sphorx, thou'rt a seasonable vessel.

SPHORX

Alack, no vessel am I, but an humble instrument, friends, of the Lord's making, the Lord's making. Well! I will sing ye a stave of an old antient tune, perhaps ye know it. 'Tis all of a man and —

GERON

And a woman, for a thousand pound!

SPHORX

There is mention of a female, and of cider, and of sheep, and of a man's wife or wives.

MOPSUS

God's justice! Had he more nor one in the song?

SPHORX

He had that before he'd done.

TEUCER

A man may do what he will in a song.

SPHORX

Shall I pitch you out the song?

GERON (*singing*)

O Pascency's a bittock place,
Tight an' right an' cosy;
The men all look you straight i' the face,
The girls are like a posy,
Clean an' fresh an' rosy.

'Tis the chorus of the song — maybe ye know it. (*Sings.*)

Martin Brewster, full-grown man,
Swore upon the Book,
For wife he'd have a cider can,
For bed the ingle-nook.
Petticoats he thus forsook.

Now for the chorus, friends, we have as aforesaid — 'O Pascency —'

MOPSUS

I say the chorus is a foolish chorus.

SPHORX

What's this, neighbour? Am I Sphorx?

MOPSUS

An' I'll prove it before a jury of horse-dealers. (*They wrangle.*)

MERLA (*to* BALKIS)

Watch those two, Mother. I've watcht 'em the evening long. Where she sits I might 'a' set; what she does I could 'a' done, and better; his eyne might 'a' covered mine with the same haste.

BALKIS

He has taught her the use of pleasure, Merla.

MERLA

I'll warrant he has.

BALKIS

She sees and feels, comes and goes but through him. Day in day out she looks nowhere but on him, or where he has gone, or where he should be coming. For a month after he brought her home she never smiled: she had been bitterly scared. Now she laughs for merest joy of him.

MERLA

Does she laugh then?

BALKIS

Yes, she cannot help it. But she is very modest; she only laughs whenas she thinks no one is looking at her. She is the most frugal girl of her blandishments I ever saw.

MERLA

I would smarther him wi' kisses in the fat beast-market o' Christmas if he were mine — as he should be.

BALKIS

Kiss him! She would sooner die than touch his hand before me.

MERLA

The fool! With our time so short. And does he not pine for a smack o' something? Is he fed? Is he filled?

BALKIS

I have seen my boy grow a man through love of her. She is a most gentle sort, and as modest as a dead woman; but pride is aflame in her breast. She is as proud and keen as a hawk. Do I not know? Well she may be!

MERLA

Men say you were proud once, Mother Balkis.

BALKIS

Child, there is a patient pride, and a pride that trembles at a hurt; there is a pride on knees, and a pride where the knee may not bend. Perhaps I am too proud to be ashamed of a crooked knee: perhaps that was forced upon me.

MERLA

It might be forced upon her, I suppose.

BALKIS

Maybe, maybe. Talk is idler than breath.

GERON (*shouting*)

Mopsus, ye thief, I'll pump it out of ye! Where's my daughter? Let her judge between me and thee. Where's my daughter?

BALKIS

I am here, father. (*She rises and goes over to the men.*)

MERLA

I should like to be by; I should like to humble her. She has stolen my lad: she is a devil. A woman has bewitcht a woman for less than this, to steal away her own lad. He was always mine: who will deny it in Champney Valtort? Will Marsyas deny it? Or Nautis deny it? Did they not sue for me feast after feast, sheep-eyeing and with proffer of flowers and fairings? Fairings! What have I to do with fairings, being love-sick to death? Will Autonoë deny I chose

for Neanias? She that stumbled between Karthon and Milo, not knowing which to choose, so askt me to choose first? Neanias was my only choosing, ever my choosing. This milk-face, this fish-blooded who-knows-who to have Neanias for man! Who was your mother, woman? Bid her name your father if she can: she can never name him. Gorgo, blear-eyed and sans a tooth, is my woman. She dwells by Knapwyk Edge, in a split rock, and bewitches half the Wapentake.

'As the manikin frets i' the fire,
So fret you, my hate's desire.'

That's the right of it; 'tis a matter of silver money. Let her wither, let her wither, the mute woman! Why, she's a witch herself; that's as sure as salvation here and now. Scared, was she? There's a rough music might set her heart in her mouth. Goes to Church like a folded nun; eats the Lord; kneels to Mary; follows her man like a dog at his heels — bitch-wolf! He'll peak and dwindle when there comes a changeling child with a parchmenty wise old face. O my Nan, thou who wert so keen and so feat! O lad that I loved and dared not speak!

Year by year I followed you: am I to follow your coffin? I shall follow in my own if so be. Girl, I wish you sorrow who've brought sorrow and shame unto me.

GERON (*loudly*)

I tell you all I heard the sheep: the wind hath veered, she is getting out of the West. There'll be wet before morn.

TEUCER

Who cares? I've bankt my roots.

MOPSUS

There's wet a'ready if thou hast not suckt it dry, Master Sphorx. Pass the dipper and let me try the bowl again. Here's a health to Kings, Queens, and Shepherds! (*Drinks.*) Now listen to me, for I've a tale to tell, being wetter than I was.

NEANIAS (*low, to* AGLAË)

I could watch you for ever, Aglaë, wondering at your gentle ways. You smile at me: do you like me to say that? When I think of — no, no, don't be frightened, I won't speak of such things; they are done with — but I may be humble before you,

mayn't I? Do you shake your head? Ah, love, love, it is true though! Your lineage I cannot even guess at. I am but a young shepherd on my grandad's grass. From that day when you put up your hair you became a cottager's woman. You must wear the cotton gown, cramp your feet in worsted stockings and worse. You wash, you sew, you peel potatoes, you rinse the less honourable parts of pigs: you will work harder yet — Saints in bliss! there is work to be done. But I, your sworn master, scarce dare touch you. There is some sacred solemn thing comes beaming from your quiet eyes; you are so altogether lovely, recluse, remote, dwelling alone with the thoughts that lie behind your lockt lips. Now I have told you this, how dare you look proud of me? How dare you, Aglaë? What more am I? Nay, never seek to kiss my hand; never look meek before me — what more am I? Oh, I know what you would say. Your shepherd is very near to Earth. He grows up from her lap, he never quite leaves her bosom; he is her foster-child. He may hear her heart-beats and drink of her tears. If she smiles he knoweth why. He has listened and he knoweth. She telleth him her secret

thoughts; all the day long he may lie close in her arms. No man so proper for that sweet bed; no man may be so ready to die and mingle with her. We were as brother and sister before her, Aglaë, or ever we were man and wife. Who so proper as a shepherd, Earth's foster-child, to catch to his heart Earth's delicate, most timid Hour, and keep it hidden there? O my Virgin Dawn, thus I caught you, my Virgin Dawn!

MERLA (*plucking* BALKIS' *gown*)

See him now, see him now, Mother Balkis!

BALKIS

Heed the grandfather, he is risen.

(*Silence. All listen to the wind at the door.*)

GERON

I smell dog-fox.

SPHORX

Returned to his vomit.

TEUCER

The wise Sphorx, the radiant, sober Sphorx!

MOPSUS

Eh, eh! Who's not sober if Sphorx is sober? There's a chance for me at this quiet moment could I but set my knees hard. I might rise. Let me lean on the table and speak very loud. Antient comrades, listen to a weeping man! What is a priest, I was saying, what, pray, is a priest but a mixture of sects? Being woman by virtue of his petticoats and boy by reason of his simplicity! Then where is the man he should be? Answer me that: where is that man?

GERON

The weather thickens, I tell you. Hark to the wind.

TEUCER

Hey! That was a buffet. Well, we're snug enough within.

MOPSUS

I weep, I tell you, for unreliable mischief. Oh, yes!

GERON

Rot the man! Listen to the wind, I say.

SPHORX

Blow wind, shoot shower, bend tall tree!

BALKIS

Thy maid looks scared, Neanias.

NEANIAS

I know, I know. What beastliness these old men have in their cups! I never saw them so in my youth.

BALKIS

You never saw them at all, son. Your eyes are opened. You change, but they change not.

NEANIAS

O Mother, Mother, I love her; she is my dear!

GERON (*hitting the table*)

Dog-fox is near by. Do ye smell him now?

MOPSUS (*drunk*)

Let me speak, let me speak, or I burst into tears. Would you see a man cry before his time? Why shouldn't I speak?

NEANIAS (*crosses to* AGLAË)

Aglaë, come to me. Are you frightened, Aglaë? No. Then why do you open your eyes and fix them so? And why do you

look at the window so quick? What are you waiting for? Oh, you are white again, and the chill grows! Let me chafe your hands. Give me your two hands.

BALKIS

She hears the rain beat at the casement.

GERON

That was never rain, daughter. Some one knockt. There is shaking at the window.

BALKIS

Who should knock such a night as this? It is the rose-bush torn loose by the wind.

GERON

No more of this. Boy, go you out and see who's there.

NEANIAS

Yes, grandfather. Stay, Aglaë, I'll come back to you. Let go my hand, my dear, let go my smock. Why, Aglaë, you are trembling; what's the matter, my girl?

(*A pause. All listen. Tempest.*)

BALKIS

There is something there. I heard it that time. Listen now. What is that snuffling at the door? Breathing short and going, breathing again hot and short? Hark, hark. (*She leans close to the door.*)

MOPSUS

Ho there!

GERON

Be quiet, you old fool. Now listen all. (*Pause.*)

BALKIS (*at the door*)

I hear feet, hundreds of little feet outside.

MERLA

Look at the dog! It's the sheep, it's the sheep!

GERON

The sheep! Is the world gone mad? (*He listens.*) Lord of Creation, she's right. The flock is loosed: the flock is passing down the road without dog or shepherd. Mercy and Love!

SPHORX (*sitting down*)

Righteousness and Peace have kist each

other. Very true words. Pass you the dipper.

GERON

Where's my cloak? Where the devil's my cloak? Where's my crook then? Balkis, get my shoon on. What turmoil is this? What upsetting? What rending asunder? My shoon, woman! (BALKIS *goes out.*) Hope of Heaven, am I stopt for a thick sole? Come Kep, come boy, come neighbours! Head 'em back, Kep, loo! loo!

(*He bursts the door open; the wind blows in with dead leaves.* GERON, TEUCER, MOPSUS, *and* SPHORX *go out.*)

NEANIAS

Aglaë, Aglaë, wife, wife! O my love! The evil hour! No, no, let me go, let me go, I say. I must go.

(*He breaks away and goes out: the door is left open.* AGLAË *stands looking out fixedly. A storm of wind and rain.*)

MERLA (*crossing to* AGLAË, *faces her*)

If you were not so ghastly white, if you had not such piteous eyes, if your mouth

were not drawn with fear, I would kill you, woman. They call red hair Judas hair; they say it means fire in the blood. There's fire in mine to crack my skin — and you've litten it. Where are you going, child? Do you know my meaning? Will you take your whining face abroad on such a night? Ye'll chill the rain with your secret ways. God to judge me, she is muttering in a strange tongue! She is dumb, she makes no sound, she looks ever to the open door, she is dead wi' waiting for something to peal upon us. Now, now, now, she has bettered it; she groweth taller — she is very slim! She is proud as the fire. Shall I stop her? Who knows what she will do? I always said she was evil — God knows what she will do: and what Nan will do when he finds her gone. Her eyes are alight! This is no young woman, but a clear spirit. No, no, stop! Stay till your man comes home. Stop you, face not the rain and storm. I loved him; you know I loved him, and hated you for it. Stop, stop, stop! O the light in her eyes! . . . I can hold her no more.

(AGLAË *goes out swiftly.*)

She is gone! Balkis, Balkis, Balkis! She is gone away, she hath left her home (*running*

about), she is clean gone. I am alone here! When Nan comes back he will kill me; certain sure, certain sure! Well, I'll die looking at him like a stricken ox. To kill me a' must touch me. A'll take me by the neck and force me down; down I shall drop like a sturdy sheep i' the totter — down, down, down! I shall die with his touch upon me, looking into his lordly eyes. Merla, my wench, thou canst do no better. Hist! I hear his step now, quick and eager, with murder in it. He shall find me kneeling. (*She kneels to a print of the Holy Family.*) Mother Mary, I am going to die.

(*Enter* NEANIAS *hastily.*)

NEANIAS

Aglaë, fetch quickly my tipt-staff. Foolish child, do you want to be blown away? . . . What, empty? Who mocks me then? The fire is out, . . . pish, let it die! Oh, Merla, where is Aglaë? Where is Aglaë? Oh, Merla!

MERLA

I am ready, Neanias. You have only to hit me and I drop.

NEANIAS

Are you mad, fool? Who has, ——? Where is my ——, my —— Aglaë?

MERLA

She went, lad. I couldna stop her. I tried, but she went swiftly, driven by the fires she had in her.

NEANIAS

Fire! and she so cold!

MERLA

She was cold an' white an' thrawn like a rag, at first. Then her pride seemed to quicken, an' she lit up like a beacon blaze, an' out o' the door like a blown flame.

NEANIAS

I heard voices — the Sisters are screaming up on the Fells. They have her again: she was mine and now is theirs. Ah, never, never, never! They shall see I am a man by now! Stay there, fool.

(*Exit.*)

MERLA

He never toucht me nor lookt upon me. He thought nothing of me. Always Aglaë, always her! These voices, voices in the night, what are they? (*She listens, looking out. The wind is furious.*) I hear him at the Moor Gate: an' the Beck's in flood! He has banged-to the gate. He is up the Fell!

VOICES (*outside*)

The night is awake! Heu! Heu!
The night is angry and bare!

MERLA (*kneeling*)

Lucy and Agatha, Catherine, Ursula! Mother of Jesus, I loved him, I love him! Whither he went I went in his steps. I must follow him now.

(*She goes out. The Moor gate is banged-to again. The wind blows through the Cottage from the open door.*)

END OF SCENE I.

SCENE SECOND

The top of the Fell. A strong wind, with rain, blows the six standing trees: one tree is down. PAN *sits on the fallen tree,* AGLAË *croucht at his feet. The six* DAUGHTERS OF EARTH *wheel round them, screaming.*

THE SIX

THE night is awake; she is having the bent of her will,
Pan, Pan, O Pan!
Pan sporteth abroad, who shall be still?
Not I, not you, nor you!
Pan sleepeth at noon; he is fierce in the beat
Of the noon-day heat.
Who is the Shepherd dareth to pipe
Ere Pan's pleasure is ripe?
Ho! Now the night calleth, Pan is awake
Hungry, keen of his meat!
Ho! Look about there! Ho, shudder and shake,
Ye that are hasty of feet!
Fly, fly, fly! Blow, wind, buffet us, blast!

Shriek, rain, as you fall; whip the waters, fall fast,
Till the tree snaps as a mast!
Scurry clouds, drive over the Moon's thin face,
Dance as we dance;
Lead the dance of the sky:
Who will do mischief? I!
I! and I! and I!

(*They all form a ring round* PAN *and* AGLAË.)

DRYAS (*pointing*)

O sisters, her quaint gown! Cotton stuff pincht by a leather belt. She is all hid but her face and hands. The rain drives and her gown clings.

GEËRNA

And her hair put up in a twisty knot. Ho! She is like a moulting pheasant.

PHŒNO

She hath worsted stockings: how can she run down the wind? O stormy rain, how I love you!

DRYAS

And oh, her little feet in prison! Poor Aglaë, what hast thou endured?

GEËRNA

When does the hart come, sister, to spy for the roe?

PHŒNO

Anon, anon.

DRYAS

I hear his labouring step, panting and slow.

EROTION

His task-work shall near be done.

SITYS

The roe is fast in the toils: alas for her!

DRYAS

Alas for him!

ADORA

His eyes should be glazed and dim.

PHŒNO

He that was dainty and clean of limb.

DRYAS (*shrieking*)

Foh! What's there in the haze? The starvèd face of a man! Cobwebs lasht on his eyes: look, look, there's a rat!

EROTION

The rat came to grope for his meal. There shall be feeding hereafter for rat and for rain; and I shall sit on the ground and feed my eyes full. Pan, Pan, I love you for this!

SITYS

Hush, hush down your voices, the shepherd boy cometh.

(*Enter* NEANIAS. *They all curtsey to him, mopping and mowing.*)

THE SIX

The night is awake, awake, awake,
Shrilly the wind doth blow:
The shepherd must toil till his heart-strings break,
And then he shall stumble slow —
Slow, slow, slow!

EROTION

Once more, Neanias. We welcome you once more to our ring.

DRYAS

O Neanias, you will soon have a beard. What a pity!

NEANIAS

I am in no mood for this. Where is my wife, you hell-cats?

THE SIX (*dancing about him*)

His cheeks are wet with rain and tears,
Anger grindeth his tooth:
The salt gale tingleth in his ears
To spoil his pretty youth —
With ruth, ruth, ruth!

ADORA

Your heavens and hells are not for us. We are of the earth. Cease your church-music, therefore; we are in a mad mood this night. Pan! How I love thee, Pan!

NEANIAS

Oh, Adora, where is my wife?

ADORA

Nay, you must ask Phœno.

NEANIAS

Phœno, Phœno, I will have my wife.

PHŒNO

I am tired with dancing, Neanias; ask Sitys.

NEANIAS

I bid you, Sitys, render back Aglaë.

SITYS

Oh, Neanias, you are comely when you are so earnest. I can refuse you nothing, though you refuse me much. Therefore, you should ask Geërna.

NEANIAS

Geërna, ah, Geërna! Will you not give me my Aglaë?

GEËRNA

Ask of Dryas, youth. I must go and sport with the moon. She is quick.

NEANIAS

They are mocking me, Dryas? May I not have my own again?

DRYAS

Now you are meeker, now you are much meeker. Therefore ask Erotion.

NEANIAS

Nay, I will never ask Erotion, but will seek for myself rather.

EROTION

Seek Pan and your own woe then, for I'll not stir to save you. Run on, run on!

NEANIAS

In nomine Patris, et Filii, et Spiritûs Sancti. Imps of the dark and the Devil, bring me to this Pan. What now? The wind is lulled.

PAN

Pan is here.

NEANIAS

Who speaks like a great wind? Whose voice comes from afar off over the Fells? Who is hidden? What is that white pity huddled and bound? Ah, ah! My love, my dear, is it thou? All's to do again, Aglaë; thou art peakt as of old! O come away, come to me, come with me! The hearth is growing cold, ashes choke up the fire, the room is empty. O my dear heart, O my faithful heart! Satan, what hast thou to do here between a man and his wife?

SITYS

The boy is bold.

ADORA

Too bold.

EROTION

He is bold enough now. Stay, stay.

PAN

I am Pan, haunter of these wilds. All breathing things confess me save only men. These in their foolishness have said, Tush, Pan is dead. Things breathing are for us therefore; let us rule them with stone and iron. So man boasteth, and rideth abroad to look upon all that is. Then I stretch out my hand secretly and strike him blind with terror. He babbles with a silly tongue of terror, loneliness, and the dark full of whispers. And he that went out swiftly is stiller than stone, and the prating tongue is clogged with fear, and the roving eye frozen to the socket thereof. Thou, Neanias, hast pried too curiously, and too eagerly grabbed that is mine. Thou little boaster! (NEANIAS *covers his face.*) I am Pan still. And my hand is upon thy flock, and thy kindred and all that thou callest thine; but chiefest it is upon that rebel whom thou thinkest to have to wife. She is mine: was it not told thee

in the beginning? She is mine: thou shalt know it in the end. Seek no further; get thee back and whimper as men use; call on thy gods by their names. They are thy gods, but I am Pan, and the Earth is mine. (PAN *and* AGLAË *disappear.*)

NEANIAS (*looking up*)

His voice cometh down like the wind from the furthest hills, and from the hills that feel the sea. His voice is grave and even! He is like the motionless hills, and I break my sinews against a rock. Aglaë! Where art thou, dear? They have taken away my wife. Mother, Mother, they have her again. Tush, my mother is not here, and I am a man. I had forgot it. What then? Shall I give her up? Could I give you up, Aglaë? Do you not know me yet, my girl? If I am to break, I will break. On then. (*Going.*)

THE SIX

Heu, heu, heu! The storm fighteth the air.

DRYAS (*following* NEANIAS)

Neanias! Neanias!

NEANIAS

Well!

DRYAS

Hush! Must you follow them?

NEANIAS

My lass, if you knew anything of men, you would know that they fear nothing save dishonour, and that they would rather lose life than shame love. I do follow.

DRYAS

But I think I love you, Neanias.

NEANIAS

If you love me, you will help me find Aglaë.

DRYAS

If I loved you, that is what I should never do.

NEANIAS

Then you know nothing of love. You are a wanton. Off!

(*Exit quickly.*)

DRYAS

A wanton, what is that? One who loves, or who does not love? The boy is a fool, but I love him for his foolishness. I love him altogether. Am I wanton then, or no wanton? (*She sees* MERLA *coming.*) O sisters, look, look, look!

(*Enter* MERLA. *The Six gather round her without her perceiving them.*)

MERLA

I'm a'most dead with loss of my breath, loss of a shoe, loss of Nan. Where now? Blister the wet! Virgin Martyrs, what are these women?

OMNES

Merla, Merla, Merla!

MERLA

Sakes alive, is this a place for a decent girl? Well, I never did. I'll Merl 'em. What now, you tearsheets? What now, you shameless rompstalls? Will you profligate my good name? Don't ye know a respectable gentlewoman when you see one in your

middle? Are ye not ashamed, ye flaunting streetshows, are ye not ashamed to look upon me? Get ye gone and hide your legs, you minions, and never come anigh me. Rain and darkness round about us! D'ye see my arm? I've dizzied a mad cow with un before this. Out!

OMNES

Merla, Merla, Merla, what do you seek?

MERLA

Seek! I'll tell you what I seek in a snack, you saucy hussies. I seek a stick, I seek a stiff stick.

ADORA

You lie, Merla. You seek Neanias. He is gone.

MERLA

Gone! Then he was here. And he a mated man. O bitter, bitter shame! Where is his woman then? Where's his Aglaë?

DRYAS

He is gone to find her. He will die if he do find her.

MERLA

He must not die.

DRYAS

Do you love him too, Merla?

MERLA

What's that to thee, little wanton? He's wedded her, he loves her. Oh, he loves her deep! That's enough for me. He shall have his wife though Merla come to sorrow.

DRYAS

It were better that Aglaë sorrowed, for then you would have him — perhaps.

MERLA

How should I have him, loving Aglaë, little donkey?

DRYAS

Would he love her when she was dead? Oh, I never knew that.

MERLA

You know nothing at all. He is a true lad.

DRYAS

Shall I tell you whither he went?

MERLA

You will tell me if you have a good heart.

DRYAS

I know nothing of your good and bad. I love Neanias also. He went towards the forest. Follow the white stones.

MERLA

God will reward you, girl.

DRYAS

What is a wanton, Merla? Am I wanton?

MERLA

I don't know what you are, but you have a good heart. God save you, girl. Hold up, Merla.

(*Exit* MERLA.)

SITYS

Dryas is love-sick for a boy.

GEËRNA

Her boy will never be man.

EROTION

Pan will work out my grief. Ho! I shall see him again with Pan's mark on his forehead.

PHŒNO

Listen. The wind drops. I hear the voices of men.

ADORA

More men?

SITYS

Many more. See their lanterns a-swinging.

GEËRNA

Sit we here and wait their coming. Sing, Dryas.

DRYAS

No, no, I'll not sing. I am tired.

PHŒNO

O, Dryas! Are you fevered; do you long?

ADORA

Peace now, I will sing.

(*Singing.*)

I saw a man and a maid
Courting dearly in a woodland shade.

He gave her shy mouth kisses seven:
'My love,' quod he, 'thou art my heaven!'
Thus the man to the maid.

I saw a man and his wife
Stare on the strown beach of their life.
Her eyes on his looked fierce and fell:
'Man, thou hast shown me hell!'
Thus to the man his wife.

And thus, O Dryas, is the love of mortal men and women. They look for more than the eye can see, and win more than the heart could fear. Silly folk!

SITYS

Men are coming, many men — Hide, hide, hide! I go to the forest (*rising*).

PHŒNO

And I follow you near (*rising*).

GEËRNA

Men are sickly and dull: they die soon.

ADORA

Come, I will hold you a race (*rising*).

GEËRNA

A race, a race in the air! (*rises*).

(*They go off.* EROTION *and* DRYAS *remain.*)

DRYAS

I am wanton, he said; and she did not deny it. But I love Neanias. Aglaë too I love as of my own age and standing among the heath-people. Erotion, are you still so bitter against him?

EROTION

I am keen as a spoiled hawk. He fooled me once. Now Pan shall fool him. Let me be near. Good-bye, little sister, I am for a hunting this night.

(*Exit.*)

DRYAS

Erotion is wrathful, but I am in love. Love makes my eyes wet when I think of Neanias. Heigho! Love makes my cheeks hot. I am drowsy and full of deliciousness; but I cannot rest. I must find Neanias.

(*She goes.*)

END OF SCENE II.

SCENE THIRD

The edge of the Forest. EROTION *and* DRYAS *looking into the thicket.*

EROTION

AGLAË is coming! Aglaë is coming!
I will greet her. Mark now. (*Sings.*)

Pale Aglaë drest in yellow
And forsworn;
Grey her lips are, in her eyes
Shockt surprise
At such scorn
Come upon her from her dear bedfellow.

O for sure the times are bitter
When a maid
Slips her girdle, takes a ring;
By her king
Then's betrayed!
How to seek another yoke to fit her?

Ho! Aglaë, my parcht beauty, how now?
Where is thy shepherd boy?

(AGLAË *runs in, horrorstruck.*)

No more lovely he. Pan hath him griped.

DRYAS

O hush, sister, O hush! Pan hath smitten her again. Look at her eyes. Oh, he hath blinded our little sister! (AGLAË *takes her by the gown.*) What is it, what is it, Aglaë?

EROTION

Go not, go not, go not, Dryas, lest a fate befall thee too, and we be but five left to dance beneath the stars.

DRYAS

But she is pulling me to her; I must follow. Art thou hurt, Aglaë? Hath Pan struck —? Ah, he has, he has! And thou art all too young for his wild way: thou art as young as I. Has he . . . has he . . . has he laid his hand . . . ? Oh, Aglaë, he hath never done it! No, no, no! I cannot come then. I have never seen dead men. I live in the sun and dance in the wind by green oaks . . . no, no . . . I cannot see him. (*Whispers.*) Aglaë! I loved thy youth somewhat. I did not look for him to . . . to . . . to die! Oh, Aglaë, what shall we do? Erotion will go; she is contented now; she knows Pan's way. Oh,

how could he do it? How could he do it? . . . Dear, dost thou need me? Dost thou need laughing Dryas of the Oak's crown? . . . Is he dead yet? Is he dead yet? No! Then, Aglaë, let us go to help him. For if I loved him who knew him not, how must thou have loved him knowing all.

(*They hurry out together, hand in hand.*)

EROTION

Now I will be happy again. Now I will sleep at ease. I will seek out a bank in the forest where leaves lie thickly strewn and the wind is not heard, and I will sleep till my time comes again. Oh, my Mother Earth and my dear, if you can be hard to resent, you are sweet and warm lying, and some there are who know your pleasant peace.

(*She lies down and sleeps.*)

END OF SCENE III.

SCENE FOURTH

A clearing in the Forest. A Sheepfold with many sheep. PAN *solus.*

PAN

WHEN a man measures his eyes with God he must fail. The boy was bold, he was very bold. He fought with my hand, pricking against it with boy's persistency, blubbering and sobbing in the forest. Not for pain or fear; no, but for very impotence of passion; panting his rage against the fixt and steadfast-sure: how he fought! Yet he anger'd me, and I stretcht out my hand and gript his shoulder bones, and blew upon his eyes. Very quiet and very deep, a shudder ran down all his limbs; he grew white, and in his eyes swam the glaze of death, and of panic-fear in the face of death. For a man clings to the earth for all his proud words; earth is all he knoweth. Pan is a terrible God. No need of words when the quailed limbs are rigid. I bound him not, but left him rooted to a tree trunk, cloven with wild dread of the dark and the tongues of the

forest: he and his little rebel, quailing too and shockt blind. I, Pan, strike suddenly with fear. My rage is quicker than a storm at sea: who may abide it? Well, let us judge of the old man's sheep. If I love men, I love sheep better. A handsome flock of younglings as these eyes have seen. The master of this flock should be after my own heart. What is this coming through the sleepy wood? A girl's step, and a girl's breathing, and a girl's singing. Let me see this girl.

(*He leans over the fold. Steps heard.*)

MERLA (*without, singing softly*)

Since thou didst love Christ best
Men shore thy hidden breast.
O Saint Agatha, Maid of God,
Jesus bowed Him from Holy Rood!

PAN

A fresh voice, undismayed. Let me see this girl.

(*Enter* MERLA.)

MERLA

To think that I, Merla, cowherdess of Champney Valtort, should wander in deso-

late spaces of the night seeking for a married man! Is this a shame to me? Never say it, Merla, when it's for your Nan. Never say it. The shame was when I grudged him his white girl. She was dumb, but she could speak wi' her eyes. Oh, she spoke to me this night: her eyes were torches; they were Church candles on a black morning. "I must face this out," she says. "I will have no more sickening delay," she says. "Bring me before this threatener," she says, and rises tall as a queen-mother. "Where is this skulkin' fellow?" she says — Mother's Mercies, who's yonder? A man, by the light we have, a shagged an' blinking man! What gnarly tree-bole of a face is this? What eyes like darkling water! What cruddled hands! O his brows, like a stubbit thorn! What were best now? I am that tired I scarce can drag, much less make a run. The little one told me the way to travel. Oh, I've not mist it, I'm near by. And I'll not be scared from my lawful down-I-sit for a troop of dragons. He's staring me out. Let him stare then. I've got a beady pair as 'ull tame him if he tries worse.

(*She sits down.*)

PAN

This girl hath the shape of a polled heifer. She is neckt like a drake. "The head of a snake, the neck of a drake; sided like a team, and chined like a bream" — the old rhyme fits her well. It is long since Pan was in love with the sinew and tan of a country wench. Her hair is roped brass! Strong and able, and fresh as wet roses! What else is worth our loving in a world grown stale and queasy? (*Aloud*) Girl, you should be a-bed.

MERLA

What business o' yours, gaffer?

PAN

My business takes a wide outlook.

MERLA

Wide enough to snatch another man's sheep, it 'ud seem. (*Aside*) That bullet should find a billet.

PAN

What do you know of sheep, my lass?

MERLA

Not so much as you know of sheep-lifting, my manny, nor so much as the jail knows of you, I reckon.

PAN

You make free.

MERLA

You'll not make so free when Master Geron finds you, old lad. There's iron bracelets on the road. Are ye rope-ripe, ye villain?

PAN

Merla, come here.

MERLA

If you know my name you know my way. I come to no man's bidding, or never have yet.

PAN

Merla, come here.

MERLA

Say it again.

PAN

Nay, I am not Neanias.

MERLA (*jumping up*)

O Madam Virgin, who is this old man? Sir (if sir you be), if you know where that lad now lies, if you tell me moreover how to find him, I will bless you in my prayers. I am an honest girl, and will bless you. Neanias hath gone into the waste to look for his young wife — a slim girl that speaks wi' her eyes, being else as mute as any fish. Some stuttering demon, some Barguest or fog-devil hath sundered them by his screaming, and now they two wander the fells looking for each other. Sir, I will tell you the truth. I loved Neanias, and could never abide the girl. To see them billing, to see them sit an' gaze each at t' other, was gall to my pride. I hated her for her robbery of me; I wisht her all manner of evil. And evil has come, and I brought it. But God's love and my own love have redeemed me, and now I wish them heartily well. Oh, I should wish to see them back again at their loving! O sir, I don't know why, but I do believe you can help. Is there no way?

PAN

There is a way, Merla. (*Aside*) The girl's breath is like a cow pasture; I feel the Spring. Pan loves, Pan loves!

MERLA

What is the way?

PAN

Wouldst thou know, lassy? Art thou kind?

MERLA

Kind?

PAN

What's the song all the world must sing, Merla?

MERLA

Nay, I never heard it.

PAN

Not heard the song o' the world? Hark then: 'tis couple, and couple, and couple.

MERLA

Hands off, old knave, or I'll box your ears.

PAN

Box away, my girl. (MERLA *cuffs him soundly.*) Ho, ho! I like thee better and better. When shall it be, Merla, when shall it be?

MERLA

The old fool's for a wedding! Too forward by half. Get thee out, old rogue, and deal honestly; forswear sheep-nicking, and seek no young woman's looks till thy beard be combed. I've no mind to be kissed by a harrow. Mercy now, somebody's coming! If I should be caught here it's all over Champney Valtort by early Church. Let go my hand, ye hardy vagabond, I'll have to hide!

(*She runs behind the trees. Enter* GERON, TEUCER, MOPSUS, *and* SPHORX, *with lanterns.*)

GERON (*eagerly*)

I track 'em to be here! They've been here: Luke and John, they are even here! If them's not my sheep, let my pair eyes drop out. Now, in Fortune's name, what's this here? My sheep penned and peaceful. Nary dog, nary herd; but a man leaneth athwart a hurdle tapping his teeth. This is a fearful night, a tejus solemn night!

TEUCER

Sphorx, you're a personable man, a Gospelman, a stored and ripe man. Do you go first.

SPHORX

Never, cousin, after the shamed thing I am. Here I stand, Sphorx the elder, capering over the hills like a hardy goat, night through wet through, in the springing grass, with my bed cold and far — to no valuable end. I to address yon' ruminant! Set Mopsus first, and let me cover my grey hairs.

MOPSUS

My legs are running streamlets, I cannot stand at all. My sweat riseth to meet the rain.

GERON (*to* PAN)

Evening, master. A fine flock I see.

PAN

Yes, yes. A nicetish lot o' stuff. Happen you were wanting any?

GERON

I'll let you know about that, master, but I'll count 'em first, by your leave. (*He gets into the pen and begins to count.*) . . . six, eight, twelve . . . get over there, you swine . . . eighteen, score . . . God's Image, it's the figure to a digit! (*Goes on counting fast.*)

SPHORX (*to* PAN)

You keep gay hours, sir.

PAN

And you, friend, have been gay this night.

SPHORX

Ah, ah, there! He was by! Sir, I stand avoucht for a common narum-scarum, over-strenuous for years and station. Yet the errand was good; 'fore the Lord, it was honestly begun! Happen, you're from Min-ster-Merrow way, sir?

PAN

Happen I were?

SPHORX

I have seen your face somewhere before. I mind not the precision of it, but it would be in the open lands. To resume, sir, to resume the defences; my errand, I tell you, was honestly begun. A matter of sheep, sir, a matter of sheep scattered and lost.

MOPSUS

A matter of a boy, sir, of a full-grown man child.

TEUCER

A little matter of a girl wandered, and sorrowing relations.

PAN

And a matter of barley-brew, neighbour.

SPHORX

Sir, there shall be no deceit between you and me. With Mopsus it was a matter of a thought of beer.

GERON (*shouting*)

That's my old wether! That's the old belled sheep for a gallon of ale! Now then, master, you listen to me. I've kept sheep for fifty year, an' I've known 'em for sixty. I'm a well-known, solid, churchwarden kind of man, fair and square, gi's your fist, wet your bargain and be damned kind of man, I am. I've lost a likely flock o' sheep this night — four-score prime hoggets, two-score tegs, an' a bell-wether I wouldna change for a hunder pound. Well-beknown sheep i' the hamlet, markt i' the left buttock with a deep G. in ruddle, an' a tar-line down the back to keep the wolves away. Where are those sheep, master, if they are not here?

PAN

Fair and softly, old man. Your neighbour, being clear of his liquor, shall tell you. Master Mopsus, do you overlook one of those lambs. Read us the markings.

MOPSUS (*after looking in silence*)

Wandering gentleman-born, Geron, and all friends, I will tell the truth. I would tell if it the parson were here, and God knows he is not. These lambkins are markt with a P. in ruddle on the right buttock, an' a tarring round the neck to keep the wolves away.

GERON

That's my old bell-wether for a gallon of beer; witchcraft hath done it.

PAN

Would you know the rest of the lost flock if you saw it? Not all sheep were lost to-night, eh, friends?

TEUCER

Right, right. I had clean forgot. There was a lad and his lassie. A matter of this old man's grandson, and a grave, silent girl appurtenant thereunto.

SPHORX

Item, item, item! A frolic red-cheekt girl wi' hair on flames, and a grand milker — so she was, Teucer, and you should know it — lost this night. Name o' Merla. Handsome gal, with a loud and masterful way of her own, very taking at first.

PAN (*aside*)

Hum, I like these folks. I'm no God to be angry for ever. The bold-eyed wench hath done it, or may do it if I teach her to sing my song. (*Aloud*) Might that youth be called Neanias?

GERON

That is the name of my dead son's son. He was a peart and simple boy, and feared nothing. And he loved sheep and knew them; and open weather he loved, and all growing things. More than ever I saw in moor or coppice or breaking hedge-row, he saw. He was a good lad. If he is dead he is the last of us, for I'm on the edge of the grave. My land is held to me and my heirs for ever; and he, being the last, is dead first. That was my boy's name, sir, sure enough.

PAN

And the girl?

GERON

They called her name Aglaë; I liked her mainly. She was high-born, I could see (for I've a shrewd eye for my betters), and timid she was, and subservient. Withal her meekness became her well, being patience without abasement. Nothing was too low for her to stoop to, yet in stooping she seemed lifted up. She was always dumb, sir, and very gentle. And if my boy be dead, 'twill be well she die also, for dumb grief worketh to frenzy and a frozen heart, God knoweth! That old bell-wether should be mine; he should, or I'm past work.

PAN

Let us see. I will tell you of your sheep, sir. Master Sphorx, do you know your way home?

SPHORX

Do I know the road? Let my right hand forget her cunning if I know it not. I've a wife a-bed: I shall be home soon enough.

TEUCER

I hope my wife is a-bed; but I doubt, I doubt terribly.

MOPSUS

I know my wife is not a-bed. There's conversations for me in the small hours.

PAN

Master Geron, I like you well for the sake of the trade you follow; I like you better for your solid parts. It is hard matter for a man to live in the open and be a sniveller. Yet you are stouter than most. Trust me, master, go your ways in peace. You will find your sheep where they should be. Go your ways.

GERON

Sir, I know your face and powerfully like your conversation. Where is my boy and girl?

PAN

Well, well, well. They may come home yet. I told you to trust me.

SPHORX

There was some small matter, sir, of a red-haired gal.

PAN

There is matter of many things, Sphorx. Go your ways, good friends.

GERON

I'm no fool, neighbours. I trust that hairy man.

MOPSUS

A hairy man he is, Geron. Yet gentleman-born.

GERON

My heart is uplifting. I bid ye good-night, sir.

SPHORX

And good-night to you, sir. I shall look to see you at Minster-Merrow fair.

PAN

Good-night all.

OMNES

Night, sir, night, sir!

(*Exeunt.*)

PAN

Merla, Merla!

(*She crawls from the thicket.*)

MERLA

My name's been flying. 'Tis time for me to be off lest I lose it altogether.

PAN

Tack it on to mine, girl, tack it on to mine.

MERLA

And what might that be then? Who's your folk? What's your property? How do you come here, old gallus-bird, speakin' wi' honest lasses? Get you gone; I'm ashamed. What have you to do with me?

PAN

Do you think so lightly of your friends, Merla?

MERLA

Friends! Wholesome friends!

PAN

But Aglaë, Merla? What of her?

MERLA

Aglaë, my boy's woman! O Virgin, I must bring her back.

DRYAS (*outside*)

O Pan, O Pan, O Pan!

PAN

Timely, timely!

DRYAS (*outside*)

O Pan, O Pan, O Pan!

MERLA

There is crying in the wood. There is sound of flight in the air. I'm alive, but no more.

DRYAS (*nearer*)

O Pan, O Pan, O Pan!

MERLA

Jesus, Mary, look at this!

(DRYAS *comes in swiftly and falls at* PAN'S *feet.*)

DRYAS

O lord Pan, save them, save them, save them! They are near to dying, they are frost-bit, they stare with their eyes! O Pan, they have frost in their hair, their hairs are stiff with frost! Lord, lord, be pitiful! I,

who never knew sorrow before, have tears — see, see!

PAN

I see thee, Dryas. Merla, what of Aglaë?

MERLA

Save, save, save — O God!

PAN

Merla can loose them if she will. She knows the song she should sing. Ask her, Dryas.

DRYAS

O Merla, you said I was wanton.

MERLA

I said you had a good heart, child. You have. You have found the grace of tears. Say no more; you shall never ask me in vain what I askt of you and gained. (*To* PAN) Master Pan, will he and she have their dear desire?

PAN

They shall be loost.

MERLA

But I must be tied?

PAN

Sing the song of all the world, Merla.

MERLA (*aside*)

I'll set you some singing, old shagpoll, when I've got ye to church! (*Aloud*) Give them their dear desire. I stay.

PAN

Off, Dryas, off.

(*Exit* DRYAS, *swiftly.*)

END OF SCENE IV.

SCENE FIFTH

The Cottage at dusk. Epiphany Eve. BALKIS *knitting,* AGLAË *toasting bread at the fire.*

BALKIS

IT has stopt snowing, but the night falls fast. They will soon be in. Have you the water boiling, Aglaë?

AGLAË

Yes, mother. All is ready. There are hot cakes in the oven.

BALKIS

You will make your man too sleek, child, with such fare. He'll never face the night after hot food.

AGLAË

Neanias fears nothing. I should know how bold he is. Mother, what can I do for him that I do not?

BALKIS

Aglaë, Aglaë, I think you do more than you know. I know you do more than he thinks. For I too was tamed long ago.

AGLAË

Mother, he took the spell away; he gave me . . . he gave me my soul. He has told me that Jesus is my God; but I think it is he.

BALKIS

Have you told him everything, Aglaë?

AGLAË

All, all, all. Not with my tongue: I cannot speak much of things. What need of speech? For he knows.

BALKIS

What?

AGLAË

That I love him. Yet I have never told him so.

BALKIS

I warrant he has askt it of thee.

AGLAË

Then I have said, yes.

BALKIS

Still shy, Aglaë?

AGLAË

There are things we never speak; but we do them. That is better.

BALKIS

Much better. Yet he was glad enough of thy speech, child. He told me that day he brought thee back the second time, how thou didst call to him in the night, like a running brook, with a voice like water suddenly free. "Neanias, Neanias, Neanias," thou didst cry; clear as a horn in frosty air, and

smoother and more glad than a singing-bird was thy music, he told me. But then for sobbing thou didst say no more that night.

AGLAË

There was no need, mother.

BALKIS

Some God brought you two together; the good God of country people. Send he keep you so! Hark! I hear them in the snow, knocking their boots.

AGLAË

I heard them long ago. (*She opens the door and calls.*) Neanias!

NEANIAS (*outside*)

Is that you, Aglaë? (*Enter* NEANIAS.) A solemn cold night, with a star-sparkle that bespeaks a frost.

(*Enter* GERON, *stamping.*)

GERON

Shrewish cold work on the fells, let me assure ye. See the rime in my beard. Daughter, my dry shoon.

BALKIS

Yes, my father, I have them.

(GERON *sits and* BALKIS *tends him.* AGLAË *kneels before* NEANIAS *to do off his boots.*)

NEANIAS

I never like to see you at such work, my Aglaë.

AGLAË

Give me a harder task, that I may do it.

NEANIAS

Aglaë, here.

(*She lifts her face to his; he whispers.*)

Art thou still all my maid, Aglaë?

AGLAË (*whispering*)

Yes, Nan. (*He kisses her.*)

GERON

Now then for a fill-up. Gi' us a snack, wenches; let me eat some meat this 'Piphany Eve.

AGLAË

Your broth is waiting, grandfather.

(GERON, NEANIAS, *and* BALKIS *sit at meat.* AGLAË *serves them.*)

NEANIAS

Whom would you think I have seen this day? I have seen Merla. Whither she has been, what done, what left undone, she would not say. I have never seen her since . . . that night. She was here in this room then; I left her here. She tells me she is thinking of a wedding.

BALKIS

That's very well.

GERON

Who's she to wed with, boy?

NEANIAS

She tells me there is to do with a shag-haired man, who if not wed should be wed.

GERON

A shag-haired man! Might he be from Minster-Merrow way?

NEANIAS

I don't know. He hath sheep, she tells me; knows something of sheep. But a masterful man, I understand.

GERON

Hum! She will have trouble I doubt.

NEANIAS

Oh, there hath been some trouble. Merla doth not square her jaw for nothing. But she saith the man is well-to-do, is passing fond of her, even to doting, so she despairs not of bringing him up to the altar-step in time. Sooner the better. But once there, leave all to Sir Topas. He would christianize a he-goat.

GERON

He hath christianized a many.

AGLAË

He hath christianized Aglaë.

NEANIAS

To-morrow is the Epiphany Feast, Aglaë. You shall come to Church and see the world

with me. Shall I give you the Epiphany song, Aglaë?

AGLAË

Yes, Nan.

NEANIAS

Thus it goes: (*Sings*)

On a winter's night,
Frosty was the weather;
There came three Kings from far countree,
Out of the East together.

The one he carried gold,
The other he carried myrrh,
The youngest he bore an incense-boat,
And he was Balthasar!

And when they came to Bethlehem,
To Jesus and to Mary,
They bowed unto the snowy ground
That biting January.

Said Gaspar, Take this gold
In fire twice refinéd
In token, Lord, of all those pains
To which thou art resignéd.

King Melchior then said, Lord,
This myrrh it is thy savour,
A sweet and seemly offering
To win high Heaven's favour.

Then that young Balthasar
He fell to gentle crying,
O Lord, thy pity saveth us
Whose incense is our sighing!

Now blesséd is the Son,
And blesséd twice the Mother;
For if God had not chosen her,
Our Lord had needs been other!

(NEANIAS *hath* AGLAË *fast by the hand.*)

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